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EMERGENCY FORAGE

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CONSERVATION METHODS OF PRODUCING FEED FOR WAR USE



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EMERGENCY FORAGE

Conservation Methods of Producing Feed for War Use

Temporary forage crops are urgently needed as insurance against a shortage of livestock feed.

This year—more than ever before in our history—it is important to make efficient use of every available acre for emergency livestock pastures and winter forage. The plain fact is that forage hasn't kept pace with the increase in livestock.

Livestock numbers have reached an all-time record high on American farms and ranches. During the past year, the total number of cattle increased 4 percent; dairy cows and heifers, 2 percent; and hogs, 22 percent. Sheep, as compared with 1942, are down only 3 percent.

More Pastures Needed

Although pasture conditions and crop yields have been far above normal for several years, there is still a shortage of feed for livestock. In the Corn Belt States, for example, it is estimated that the amount of pasture available per animal unit has been reduced as much as 13 to 20 percent.

Our huge reserves of grain are dwindling rapidly, and it will be harder this year to obtain supplementary feeds for livestock on pasture. Thus, temporary pastures can contribute toward maximum production of livestock by:

1. Maintaining feed supplies during the entire pasture season.

2. Providing needed roughage for additional livestock on many farms.

3. Furnishing additional protein at economical cost.

4. Increasing reserves of feed against possible drought.

Selective Service for the Land

Production of additional forage fits extremely well into a well-balanced soil conservation program. On many farms, there is land poorly adapted for cultivation. This land may make its greatest contribution if used for temporary feed crops. In addition, grasses and legumes can be used in a scientific crop rotation, thereby enriching the soil and increasing the yield of crops that follow.

Just as the leaders of our nation try to fit each man into the job for which he is best suited—whether it be on the farm, in the factory, or in the armed services—so does the experienced farmer or rancher adapt every acre of his land to the job that it is most capable of doing.

With shortages of labor, equipment and production supplies, many fields which might be considered for row crops will actually add more to total production if used for pasture.

Get Idle Acres in the Fight!

A great many farms have some acreage that is idle, or where crops have been damaged by flood, drought or erosion that could be seeded to temporary pastures and hay crops.

The Agricultural Census reports 33 million acres of idle land on farms in 1939. In 1942, 10 million acres planted to major crops, not including wheat, were not harvested. Much of the abandoned land where crops have been destroyed or damaged by insects, hail, drought, floods, severe freezing, erosion, or other causes, could well be planted to temporary pasture and hay crops.

It may be hard for the individual farmer to see that he is accomplishing much by growing extra forage on a small piece of ground. And, yet, if thousands of farmers planted small fields, the total result would be very significant. Every idle acre put into pasture or feed crops is another acre helping to win the war!

Ways to Increase Forage

Farmers can help to conserve soil and moisture and produce extra feed for livestock by adopting one or more of the following practices on their farms:

1. Constructing Trench Silos—A trench silo is feasible on many farms and will provide storage space for feed which might otherwise go to waste. Many crops—such as corn, sorghum, milo, and grass—will make excellent silage. Several of the State Experiment Stations can provide reference material concerning the use of forage including grass, as silage.

2. Utilizing Less Fertile Land—Temporary pastures, such as sudan grass, can be put on poorer land that might not yield a profitable return if planted to another war crop. Sudan grass can be grown on either irrigated or dry land farms, Caution: Under certain conditions, any sorghum pasture may cause loss of livestock through prussic acid poisoning, but good management will keep these losses at a minimum.

3. Planting Sweet Clover—In many irrigated sections, sweet clover (usually yellow blossom sweet clover) makes a temporary pasture of high carrying capacity. Generally, the clover is planted with spring small grain. Although only a small amount of grazing may be expected the first season, a full grazing period is usually assured during the second season.

In higher elevations, under irrigation, a carrying capacity of $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 animal units per acre may be expected throughout the growing period of the second season.

The crop stubble, left after grazing, should be turned under in the fall of the year. This practice provides a large amount of organic matter to increase soil fertility.

Some loss of livestock from bloating may be expected on clover pastures, although good management will minimize these losses. Many farmers believe, however, that the increased gains of meat and wool more than offset the losses.

4. Grazing Early Growth of Alfalfa—Where damage from the alfalfa weevil is severe, grazing of the early growth may be advisable. Observation indicates that little loss results from weevils

when the early spring growth of alfalfa is grazed. Alfalfa, like clover, will cause bloat unless farmers exercise great care.

5. Diversifying Crops—Both the dry land and irrigation farmer should have a diversification of crops, since this is a soil-building practice. Alfalfa, clover, sorghums and sudan grass work well in a crop rotation system.

6. Using Johnson Grass—In some areas, Johnson grass may be growing on idle land. By irrigating the Johnson grass, the farmer can provide a considerable amount of additional forage. He should remember, however, that Johnson grass can cause prussic acid poisoning under certain conditions.

7. Fencing Irrigation Ditches—When irrigation ditches are fenced, livestock can utilize the vegetation growing there. Grazing keeps ditch banks free of vegetation, saves on ditch-cleaning labor, and helps in the control of noxious weeds.

8. Grazing Small Grains—If moisture conditions are favorable so that small grains will establish a good growth before freezing weather in the fall, the grain crop may be grazed in the fall and early spring with little damage.

9. Growing a Seed Crop—Often, a farmer can set aside a small patch of grass, clover, or other forage species for the production of his own supply of seed. In some instances, he can turn this practice into a profitable sideline by growing sufficient seed for sale to other farmers in his area.

10. Maintaining a Reserve Supply of Feed—

The farmer or rancher should always have a reserve of feed, either stored in silos or left ungrazed on the range. A reserve supply of feed is the best insurance against drought, insect damage, and other misfortunes that might bring financial disaster to the livestock producer.

More Forage Means More Food

War demands food—and more food—especially food with high energy value. Everyone recognizes the importance of meat, milk, butter, wool, leather, and other livestock products in the war effort. Whether or not this vital food will be produced depends upon the American farmer and rancher.

One way to guarantee an ample supply of food is to produce more forage for livestock this year. Any agricultural producer desiring additional technical information should call upon his county agent or consult with representatives of the Agricultural Adjustment Agency or the Soil Conservation Service.

It is not too late to make adjustments that will provide emergency forage for this year. Every extra pound of livestock feed produced now will be as important as bullets in defeating the Axis nations.

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CONSERVATION IN WARTIME

(Extract from Secretary of Agriculture
Wickard's annual report)

There are six vitally important ways in which conservation on the farms and ranches of America is shortening the road to victory. They are:

1. Increase of yields from cropland, pasture, forest, and range.

2. Allocation of every acre of land to the production job that suits it best.

3. Elimination of waste in soil, water, fertilizer, seed, and other elements of productive capacity.

4. Increase of the arable area—by the control of erosion, by drainage, by irrigation, or by other proved conservation practices.

5. Assurance that crops will be produced in spite of drouth, rainstorms, wind, and snow to the extent that it is possible to protect crops from bad weather.

6. Assurance that the agricultural plant will not break down—that it will be able to produce at top speed, year in and year out, as long as the war lasts.